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UNCLAS LILONGWE 000345

SIPDIS

FOR AF/PD, AF/S, AF/RA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ, LILONGWE

1. "Talabani and the Greatness of the Kurdish Soul"

2. The independent daily, "The Daily Times" of April 20, 2005, carried an opinion piece by one of Malawi's prominent writers, Jika Nkolokosa, in his regular column "Take it or Leave it". Nkolokosa writes that world leaders achieve greatness by not seeking revenge against people and government systems that oppressed them. Excerpts follow.

3. One man who has caught my fancy is Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi president who has said he will not sign a death warrant for Saddam Hussein should the courts sentence him to death. Talabani is a Kurd, the tribe that Saddam Hussein loved to persecute at the pinnacle of his dictatorship. Lesser men would revel in the opportunity to consign the detestable Butcher of Baghdad to death.

But Talabani harbors the conviction that capital punishment is wrong and will not wish it even for his bitterest enemy. This is not to say he believes that the courts should exonerate Saddam, but that his life, as miserable as it is, should be spared. He is also well aware that he will not win the battle to spare Saddam, as his two co-presidents will most likely outvote him on the issue. What counts here is that he has turned a personal conviction into a principle he is not willing to compromise.

.Having said that, I must hasten to add that It would be a very unfair world if everyone chose to forgive every petty crook in the hope of achieving a noble personality. The world is full of petty crooks who must be brought to book.

.on the other hand I do not condone what my West African brothers gained notoriety for, cold-blooded murder of their equally murderous leaders.

Take it or leave it, it is almost an act of sainthood to ignore one's own suffering and ensure the comfort of those who would not hesitate to cut one's throat.